

Folsom, PA — Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) today convened the second meeting of his Higher Education and Workforce Development Advisory Committee. This committee was established to facilitate two-way communications between the Congressman and higher education and workforce development stakeholders in the 7th Congressional District and Greater Philadelphia region.

Since taking office in January 2007, Congressman Sestak has visited area colleges and technical institutions, hosted summits on higher education and advanced training, and worked hard to pass legislation that enhance the educational opportunities of students in the district. This Committee complements those efforts through a regular forum that offers the Congressman a first hand appreciation for the scope and breadth of educational issues facing the 7th Congressional District. The meeting took place at the Penn State Brandywine campus.

Congressman Sestak is a member of the House Committee on Education and Labor, and has incorporated education into his five pillars of national security, along with health security, economic security, defense security and energy/environmental security.

A secondary education—be that at a traditional four-year institution or a trade school—is a key to personal success and an economic driver that will make America more competitive globally,” said Congressman Sestak. “With the cost of college skyrocketing, we must ensure that students from my District are not priced out of this critical opportunity.”

The Higher Education and Workforce Development Advisory Committee is one of a number of issue and action-oriented advisory bodies Congressman Sestak has established to stay connected with the needs of 7th Congressional District constituents. Currently these include the Veterans Advisory Committee, the FAA Flight Path Redesign Expert Advisory Board, the Labor Advisory Committee, and the Committee for Excellence in Community Education. Additional groups will include Congressman Sestak’s Seniors Forum, an Economic Advisory Committee, a Health Care Advisory Committee, an Environmental Advisory Committee, an Antiviolence Advisory Committee, a Community Advisory Committee, a Women in Business Advisory Committee, and an Elementary and Secondary Education Advisory Committee.

“These advisory committees provide me the opportunity to work directly with some of the most respected and knowledgeable men and women in the 7th Congressional District,” said

Congressman Sestak. "By meeting with these passionate and well-informed constituents on a regular basis, I am better prepared to sponsor the legislation necessary to address their concerns. It also affords me the opportunity to report back to the district on what has been happening in Washington."

Last fall, Congressman Sestak held a meeting with representatives of Neumann, Cabrini College, Eastern University, Immaculata University, the Pennsylvania Institute of Technology, Swarthmore College, Villanova University, Widener University, and Valley Forge Christian College. The college representatives expressed appreciation for recent federal legislation designed to address the spiraling costs of a college education and the burden on low and modest income families. They also talked about the need to provide financial incentives to students by offering loans and grants based on such criteria as academic success, retention, and commitment to community service. The College representatives presented the Congressman with a number of proposals to address skyrocketing college costs.

Since entering Congress, Sestak has supported legislation specifically targeted to help curb the rising college costs for the students and families of the 7th Congressional District:

The College Opportunity and Affordability Act, signed into law in February 2008, would help students and families plan financially for education by requiring that colleges provide information about the anticipated cost of a post-secondary degree. Institutions can offer a multi-year or single year tuition and fee schedule as part of their nonbinding estimate of students' net costs.

The legislation also instructed the Bureau of Labor statistics to develop "Higher Education Price Indices" that reflect the annual change in tuition and fees for undergraduates enrolled in specific types of institutions Higher education institutions where its increase in tuition and fees exceeds that of its applicable higher education price index would be placed on the "Higher Education Price Increase Watch List."

The legislation will also increase transparency by requiring the Department of Education to publish three lists: the 5% most expensive institutions in the country, the 5% least expensive institutions, and the 5% with the largest percentage increase in tuition prices over the previous three years

Additionally, the law requires colleges and universities placed on the “Higher Education Increase Watch List to create Quality Efficiency Task Forces which will examine the institution’s operating costs as compared to other similarly situated institutions, make recommendations on how the institution can hold down costs, and to develop annual benchmarks for reducing costs.

The College Opportunity and Affordability Act also award institutions of higher education for keeping tuition low, as the Secretary of Education would have the authority to award grants to institutions with the most modest increases in annual net tuition.

The following individuals serve or act as advisors to the 7th Congressional District

Seth Schram: Principal, Chester County Technical College High School

James R Hall: Parent

Sharon L. Cannon: Executive Director, Economic and Workforce Development Program, Cheyney University

Dr. Jerry Parker: President, Delaware County Community College (DCCC)

Rev. Peter M. Donohue: President, Villanova University

Dr. Paul A. Reid: President, The Williamson Free School

Deborah Erie: Director of Student and Enrollment Services, Penn State University, Brandywine Campus

Dr. Diane M. Disney: Chancellor, Professor of Management, Penn State University, Great Valley

Suzanne V. Holloman, MBA: Dean, Workforce Development and Continuing Education
Montgomery County Community College

Raymond L. Toole: Director of Financial Aid, Delaware County Community College (DCCC)

Jack Holefelder: Director, The Foundation of the Delaware County Chamber, Delaware County
Chamber of Commerce

Constance T. McEvoy: Director of College Counseling, Agnes Irwin School